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## Pink slips issued to hundreds of teachers, administrators and other workers at South Bay schools

By Julia Prodis Sulek  
Mercury News

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In the midst of the state's budget crisis, school districts across the South Bay sent out hundreds of pink slip notices to teachers, administrators, janitors and others on Monday, informing them of the likelihood that they will be laid off by the end of the school year.

The layoff notices are considered preliminary and were part of the more than 23,000 notices sent out statewide by Monday. Final notices will be sent May 15, though not everyone who received a March notice will be laid off. Last year, 60 percent of the 26,000 teachers who received pink slips ended up losing their jobs.

Cupertino Union School District, one of the most

high achieving districts in the state, was one of the hardest hit in the South Bay. Some 107 teachers with the lowest seniority were informed Monday they could lose their jobs, as well as five counselors and an instruction director. If all layoffs are finalized, the loss of teachers will mean that class sizes will grow from 20 students per teacher to 30.

"We have not had to do any layoffs of teachers in 25 years. It feels like a death in the family," said Nancy Johnson, Cupertino's assistant superintendent for human resources. "It feels like we're tearing down everything we've been building up in the last several years."

Still, she said, there are two possible remedies that could minimize the layoffs. A parent group is embarking on a campaign to raise \$3 million by the May layoff deadline, which would preserve the classroom ratio. At the same time, several teacher and other employee unions are considering taking furlough days next year to offset the budget shortfall.

San Jose Unified, which has laid off staff in previous years, hopes to avoid layoffs this year. Teachers have already agreed to take five unpaid furlough days during the next school year. Some 159 administrators did receive layoff notices Monday, but their union is expected to agree to the same five furlough days to avoid the ax, said district spokeswoman Karen Fuqua.

Closing the school five days will save about \$4.1 million, she said. But it also means students receive five fewer days of learning.

"It's not that we don't want to teach students," Fuqua said. "It's the reality that the money is not there."

Other districts have tried to be equally creative, but

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their reserves are either gone or running too low to avoid layoffs.

Alum Rock Union District sent out 87 notices to teachers and 20 to "certified staff," which includes custodians, health assistants, secretaries and bus drivers. The district board already voted to close Pala Middle School next year to save money. With the district's parcel tax set to expire and little hope of increasing revenues elsewhere, administrators are skeptical they will be able to retain their classroom size at 20 students per teacher.

"We're not expecting things will get any better from the state," said Alum Rock spokeswoman Aurora Quevedo. However, employee unions are in the collective bargaining process and are considering pay cuts and furloughs, she said.

Across the state last year, more than 16,000 teachers lost their jobs. In the past two years, about 10,000 classified school employees such as secretaries and custodians have been let go as public education funding for K-14 schools in California has been cut by about \$18 billion, according to the state Department of Education.

"While I understand the governor and the Legislature have tough decisions to make, these budget cuts are devastating our schools and impacting our ability to do the most important job in our society, that is, to teach our children," Jack O'Connell, state superintendent of public instruction, said in a statement.

**Bay Area News Group staff writer Theresa Harrington and the Associated Press contributed to this report. Contact Julia Prodis Sulek at 408-278-3409.**

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